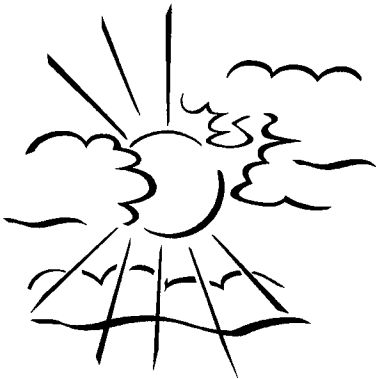


***Department
of
Human
Services***

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
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Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, May 26, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

TOPIC	PAGE
*Budget	2-7
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	8-14
Food Assistance	15-17
*Foster Care	18-21
Unemployment	22-26
Vulnerable Adults	27
Transportation	28-29
Charities	30-33
Volunteers	34-35
Unger Case	36
Day Care	37

*Important story at this spot

Michigan Report

May 25, 2006

BUDGET COMPLETIONS MEAN COMPROMISE PUZZLE BEGINS

With each legislative chamber this week wrapping up its budget work for the 2006-2007 fiscal year, the time has now come for leaders to work out their fiscal differences.

Each body is still reviewing the various budget proposals and talks between leaders should begin, at least on the legislative side, next week, said House Appropriations chair Rep. Scott Hummel (R-DeWitt).

“One thing we have to resolve is how much we are going to spend,” Mr. Hummel said, adding that after hearing the remarks made at the Revenue Estimating Conference last week, there remains a lot of uncertainty about Michigan’s future.

That’s why the House version is the least amount of general fund dollars, coming in at \$9.195 billion, compared to the governor’s \$9.252 billion and Senate’s \$9.248 billion, Mr. Hummel said.

There are a considerable number of differences between Governor Jennifer Granholm’s original 2006-07 budget recommendation and the versions passed by the Senate and the House, said State Budget Office spokesperson Greg Bird.

But with some of the significant changes, especially with the welfare changes the House made, the Senate version of the budget is probably closer to Ms. Granholm’s proposal.

Even at that, Mr. Bird said, there are considerable differences in the Senate version with cuts to the Wayne County Community Mental Health system and the fact that Ms. Granholm’s revenue proposals – closing tax loopholes and increasing liquor fees – were not enacted.

The administration is also conducting a review of its proposal to see if it needs to make any changes in light of the final revenue projects made by the Revenue Estimate Conference, Mr. Bird said.

On Thursday, Ms. Granholm said she supports a 48-month time limit for welfare benefits as long as there are exceptions for those who have the most barriers.

“Forty eight months should be long enough for someone to get on their feet,” she said.

She added that although she prefers the Senate version of the welfare budget, which includes no lifetime limit or sanctions at this time, she believes there’s more work to be done to reach a suitable compromise.

Tom Davis, chief of staff to Senate Appropriations Committee chair Sen. Shirley Johnson (R-Troy) also said the review of the two budgets is just beginning.

But aside from some of the headline differences – particularly the welfare changes the House enacted – Mr. Davis said there are not significant differences between the two chambers.

That means the possibility that the budget can be completed by June 15 is a “doable option,” Mr. Davis said.

Matt Resch, House Republican spokesperson, said besides the welfare issue, the House version of the budget does include more spending for education, revenue sharing and a trooper school, which will have to be discussed with leaders in the Senate and administration. Mr. Hummel also added that House Republicans would like to see their higher education funding formula be used more than it was last year.

Here is a look at the budget differences between the three bodies:

AGRICULTURE: The House version is the largest appropriation for the department, coming in at \$114.6 million (\$32.8 million in general funds). The Senate-passed budget is \$113.1 million (\$30.4 million in general funds), while the governor’s budget is \$111.7 million (\$30 million in general funds).

All three budgets represent a cut to the department in funding compared to the current year gross appropriation of \$119.1 million, but the budgets are higher in general funds, which were \$28.3 million this year. The decrease is largely represented by a \$10 million decrease in federal funding for the Emerald Ash Borer program.

COMMUNITY HEALTH: Ms. Granholm’s budget is the largest spending bill for the department, with \$11.2 billion (\$3 billion in general funds), mainly due to her health care insurance proposal that requires a federal waiver for the state’s Medicaid program.

The Senate’s budget version is \$11.1 billion (\$2.9 billion in general funds), while the House-passed a \$10.9 billion (\$2.9 billion in general funds) appropriation. All three budgets are increased appropriations from spending in the current fiscal year.

CORRECTIONS: The administration and Senate appropriations for the department are identical: \$1.9 billion (\$1.8 billion in general funds), while the House decreased spending here by \$30 million, all in general funds, as it took out supplemental appropriation amounts made during the current fiscal year.

All three budgets represent additional spending above current year appropriations.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY: The department’s budget in the House omnibus bill is the highest appropriation at \$442.2 million (\$33.8 million in general funds). The difference between the three budget versions mainly deals with the use of restricted revenues within the budget. The executive budget is \$410.2 million (\$33.3 million in general funds), while the Senate-passed budget is \$372.1 million (\$32.8 million).

The three budgets show decreased appropriations compared to the current fiscal year, mainly in the availability of restricted revenues.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT: The budget that deals with Legislature, the governor and seven departments – Attorney General, Civil Rights, Civil Service, Information Technology, Management and Budget, State and Treasury – are all dealt with differently

by the three bodies. Ms. Granholm's budget includes appropriations for the Michigan Strategic Fund, which was not included in the same budget during the current fiscal year. Her appropriation is \$3 billion (\$645.7 million in general funds).

The House did not include the Michigan Strategic Fund in the budget, but did separate out the Office of Auditor General, creating its own budget within general government. The chamber's budget is \$2.9 billion (\$631.2 million in general funds).

The Senate does not include the strategic fund either or the separation for the Auditor General. Its general government budget is \$3 billion (\$644.6 million in general funds).

HISTORY, ARTS AND LIBRARIES: The House version for the department is the largest, coming in at \$55.3 million (\$43.6 million in general funds), while the executive recommendation is for \$54.6 million (\$42.8 million in general funds) and the Senate calls for \$53.9 million (\$42.2 million in general funds).

All appropriations are above current year spending for the department.

HUMAN SERVICES: The executive and Senate budget versions for the department are the most similar with the governor's recommendation at \$4.47 billion (\$1.19 billion in general funds) and the Senate's at \$4.47 billion (\$1.2 billion in general funds).

The House budget, with its increased reform measures, comes in at \$4.42 billion (\$1.15 billion in general funds).

Current year spending for the department is \$4.427 billion (\$1.08 billion in general funds).

JUDICIARY: House spending here is the highest, coming in at \$259.3 million (\$161 million in general funds). The executive recommendation is \$258.2 million (\$160 million in general funds) and the Senate version totals \$257.3 million (\$158 million in general funds).

All three budgets represent increased spending above current year appropriations.

LABOR AND ECONOMIC GROWTH: Budgets for the department are nearly identical in totals. The executive version calls for \$1.217 billion (\$47.4 million in general funds), while the House has \$1.216 billion, (with general fund spending at \$48.2 million). The Senate gross appropriation is also the same but calls for \$48.8 million in general fund spending.

All budgets appropriate additional dollars above current year appropriations.

MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS: Gross appropriation is the same for the House and Executive here: \$122.3 million, though the House calls for \$41.8 million in general fund appropriations and the Executive recommends \$40.6 million. The Senate budget totals \$122.9 million, with the general fund amount identical to the governor's. All appropriations are higher than the current year.

NATURAL RESOURCES: The Senate called for the most spending here with \$290.1 million (\$24.8 million in general funds). The House budget for the department comes in

at \$288.4 million (\$26.2 million in general funds) and the Executive budget totals \$287 million (\$25.1 million in general funds).

All the budgets represent an increase compared to current year spending for the department.

STATE POLICE: The governor's budget is the most for this department, totaling \$578.4 million (\$255.2 million in general funds). The House came in second in terms of spending with \$570.4 million (\$259.2 million in general funds), while the Senate budget totals \$566.8 million (\$255.3 million in general funds). The department would be receiving more money next year under any of the proposed budgets.

TRANSPORTATION: The department with no general fund appropriations would receive the most funding under the Senate-passed version, which totals \$4.334 billion. The House calls for \$3.441 billion in appropriations, while the governor's recommendation totals \$3.442 billion.

SCHOOL AID: Spending for K-12 education in the state totals \$13.119 billion under the governor's plan, which is the highest appropriation proposed. The Senate has called for \$13.116 billion in appropriations, while the House approved \$13.103 billion. All budgets are more than current year appropriations in the fund.

EDUCATION: Much of the department's budget was transferred into the school aid spending. The House-passed appropriation is the largest, totaling \$92.4 million (\$8.6 million in general funds), while the Senate approved \$90.4 million in spending (\$6.5 million in general funds) and the Executive recommends \$90.3 million (\$6.6 million in general funds).

COMMUNITY COLLEGES: The state's 28 community colleges would receive more funding than current year appropriations under all three proposed budgets. The Executive budget totals \$287.1 million, all in general funds, while the House calls for \$288.7 million, again, all in general funds. The Senate budget is \$287.1 million, of which \$243 million in general funds and a \$43.9 million transfer from the school aid fund.

HIGHER EDUCATION: The state's 15 public universities would see increased total spending toward higher education under the three budget bills, although affecting the schools in different ways. The governor's budget is \$1.741 billion (\$1.585 billion in general funds). The House version is \$1.780 billion (\$1.629 billion in general funds) and the Senate budget totals \$1.777 billion (\$1.617 billion in general funds).

May 25, 2006

WITH FIVE VETOES GOVERNOR SIGNS SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPS BILL

Governor Jennifer Granholm signed SB 242, the supplemental appropriations bill, into law Thursday afternoon. Ms. Granholm used her line-item veto five times, while placing a hold on the \$7 million Tobacco Securitization Economic Development appropriation.

Ms. Granholm directed the treasurer to halt any spending until legal questions relating to the Michigan Trust Fund Act and Michigan Strategic Fund Act were resolved. When asked, the governor's office did not specify what those questions were.

Ari Adler, press secretary for Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (R-Wyoming), said the \$7 million is for economic development and that the hold was the "most disappointing" part of her line-item veto letter, and that resolving whatever questions she had needed to "certainly be at the top of the to do list for any lawyers she has on staff."

"Instead of \$7 million developing the economy, we have \$7 million developing dust," said Mr. Adler.

Republicans were also particularly upset by the veto of a provision that would have forced the Department of Corrections to use vacant beds at the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility near Baldwin before it opened new facilities or expanded at other existing sites.

"It is obvious the governor has decided once again to wash her hands of the economic devastation she created in Lake County," said Sen. Michelle McManus (R-Lake Leelanau). "If she truly was interested in going anywhere and doing anything to create jobs, her first stop should be Northern Michigan. This is another example of the state breaking its commitment to the economic recovery of Lake County."

But administration officials said the bill's language meddled too much in the day-to-day operations of the Corrections department.

"What that language is doing is telling the department how to best run their prisons," said Greg Bird, spokesperson for the State Budget Office.

Ms. Granholm also vetoed a provision that would prohibit the Department of Human Services from placing a child in a facility outside Michigan unless there were no other available facilities in Michigan and the facility met all legal qualifications in both its own state and Michigan as confirmed through an official DHS site visit.

Mr. Bird said that provision, like its Corrections counterpart, would be micromanaging the respective department.

But Mr. Adler said that increased legislative oversight happens when legislators are concerned about the department's operations. While he did not say the Patrick Selepak

and Ricky Holland cases contributed directly to the extra oversight in the Corrections and DHS budget supplementals respectively, he conceded that the two cases have “certainly drawn attention to those two departments and how they’re being run.”

Ms. Granholm also vetoed a \$100,000 expenditure for the Department of Treasury that would have compelled the treasurer, along with the House and Senate Fiscal agencies, to draft legislation that would “allow the agencies access to all relevant taxpayer information while providing adequate protection against inappropriate disclosure.”

She cited “serious concerns about the potential impact of this appropriation on the confidentiality of individual tax records” in her veto letter.

Mr. Adler said the veto would be a hurdle to finding out information when considering how to replace the Small Business Tax revenues, because “anytime we need to get a handle on information, we have to go through the Treasury.”

“We hope that they are as responsive as Mr. (Robert) Klein suggested that they could be,” Mr. Adler said. Mr. Klein, who helped author the SBT in the mid-1970’s, was approved as the new treasurer by the Senate on Wednesday.

Ms. Granholm also vetoed a \$500,000 appropriation to the Department of State that would have been used to provide ID cards to voters without a driver’s license or state ID card, saying the money could be better used to increase voter turnout.

In addition, she vetoed an appropriation for a site assessment at Little Black Creek. Mr. Adler said the money would have gone to environmental cleanup and restoration, while Mr. Bird and Ms. Granholm said there is a DEQ process for projects. The Little Black Creek veto has become a staple of Ms. Granholm’s appropriation letters, Mr. Adler said, having been featured at least twice before.

Teachers Failed To Report Suspected Child Abuse

Middle School Teachers Reprimanded By School

POSTED: 12:38 pm EDT May 25, 2006

UPDATED: 12:56 pm EDT May 25, 2006

PONTIAC, Mich. -- Two Pontiac middle school teachers have been charged with failing to report suspected child abuse.

Lisa Powe and Carol Fleming, both teachers at Pontiac's Madison Middle School, did not inform a state agency when a girl told them her mother's boyfriend was molesting her, prosecutors said.

The law requires teachers, police officers, doctors and social workers to immediately contact the state Department of Human Services when they suspect child abuse or neglect.

The mother's 42-year-old boyfriend will be sentenced June 13 for first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Authorities said in May 2005, the girl, now 14, told Powe that her mother's boyfriend was inappropriately touching her and that her mother was unaware of it.

Powe informed Fleming, her supervisor, and the girl then repeated her story to Fleming, police said.

Both teachers were reprimanded, but school officials refused to say how or whether they were still teaching at the school.

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Pontiac Toddler Accidentally Shoots Himself

Father, Girlfriend Questioned And Released

POSTED: 8:31 am EDT May 26, 2006

UPDATED: 12:09 pm EDT May 26, 2006

A 3-year-old boy's condition has improved Friday after accidentally shooting himself in the head, Local 4 reported.

The toddler, Dedric Ducksworth, was at his home in the 100 block of Summitt Street in Pontiac Thursday evening when the incident occurred, according to police. He was apparently playing with the gun when it went off, Local 4 reported.

The boy was initially listed in critical condition, but doctors upgraded him to serious condition Friday morning.

The boy's father and his father's girlfriend were questioned by police and then released, the station reported.

Police continue their investigation.

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Jury of 12 finds Sours not guilty of manslaughter, first degree child abuse

By Don Reid Coldwater Daily Reporter Staff Writer

May 26, 2006

COLDWATER — The seven woman and five men on a Branch County Circuit Court jury deliberated for four hours before finding Chris Sours, 41, not guilty of manslaughter and first degree child abuse in the December 3, 2002 death five and a half month old Jeremy Vincent.

The jury did find Sours guilty of a lesser included offense of second degree child abuse, a four year felony. Sours remains in jail where he has been since his arrest last November, pending sentencing on June 23 after the required pre-sentence investigation is completed. The original charges were 15 year felonies.

The baby's mother, Billie Jo Vincent fled the courtroom in tears with her family after the verdict was read.

Couple may stay in Texas

Friday, May 26, 2006

By John Tunison
The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- A Holland couple fighting extradition to Texas on murder charges likely will not be returned to Michigan, despite claims they were wrongly released to Texas authorities from Ottawa County's jail this week.

County Prosecutor Ron Frantz said Ottawa County's judicial system may have little power to force the return of Cipriano Gonzales IV and his wife, Esther.

"I can't speculate what a judge might do, but it's not likely they are coming back," he said.

The surprise removal has outraged defense lawyers, upset that the Gonzaleses were sent to the nation's leading death penalty state in a case they say is built on flimsy evidence.

Attorneys for the couple filed motions Thursday in Holland District Court to try to have them returned.

The Gonzaleses are charged in the March 11 death of their infant daughter, eight days after the pair moved to San Marcos, Texas. They were arrested after returning to Holland for the funeral.

The couple was awaiting an extradition hearing, scheduled for next Wednesday, when Gov. Jennifer Granholm's office signed off on a murder warrant from the Texas governor, then sent it to the Ottawa Jail. Officials at the jail then called Hays County, Texas, authorities to pick up the couple, without checking for any pending hearings.

The couple, both 23, began the 1,300-mile trek Tuesday but had not yet arrived at the Hays County Jail as of this morning, a jail official said.

"Obviously, they had a right to a hearing, but we followed the direction of the governor's warrant," Ottawa County Undersheriff Greg Steigenga said.

Steigenga said the Gonzaleses would not have been released if jail administrator Lt. Steve Baar and others had known of the upcoming extradition hearing, but said he was "comfortable" with the jail's authority to release them. He refused to blame anyone at the jail and said he does not foresee any reprimands.

"I'm not aware of any formal notification we were given about the hearing," he said.

The mix-up has triggered a review

of jail procedures regarding extraditions, Steigenga said.

Still, he questioned whether an extradition hearing -- mostly used to verify a suspect's identity -- would have made a difference because attorneys cannot argue about evidence.

But Holland attorney John Moritz, representing Esther Gonzales, said the hearing could have been important.

He planned to argue that injuries suffered by 2-month-old Cynthea Gonzales could have occurred in Michigan, a claim that could negate extradition.

He also questioned whether the Texas warrant was valid because it is based on two autopsies -- one that determined the cause of death was inconclusive and another that is pending.

In court motions filed Thursday, Moritz and Brad Johnson, representing Cipriano Gonzales IV, argued that Holland District Judge Brad Knoll must sign an extradition order before their clients can be removed.

Moritz said the transport of the couple to Texas is troublesome for several reasons, including the possibility of being given the death penalty there if convicted.

Nineteen prisoners were put to death there in 2005, and 10 so far this year.

Sgt. Penny Dunn of the San Marcos Police Department said court hearings there likely will not proceed until the second autopsy is finished.

Send e-mail to the author: jtunison@grpress.com

Society can work to end bullying in our schools

The Kalamazoo Gazette

Friday, May 26, 2006

By Katherine Rockafeld

I was really disappointed that the Kalamazoo Gazette chose to print a bizarre and flawed article such as the one on April 30 from Cox News Service featuring a so-called ``bully expert."

This individual, Izzy Kalman, makes a number of erroneous statements in support of his method of dealing with bullies which involves making the victim of a bully take responsibility for ending the abuse. Kalman starts off by claiming that bullying is ``human nature."

Research studies, such as the one conducted by The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and reported on in 2001, show that, on a consistent basis, only about 13 percent of students bully others regularly. Kalman goes on to imply the victims of bullies may bully others. This also is not true, according to the NICHD. Only 6 percent of students are both bullies and victims. This leaves a whopping majority who do not engage in bullying. That hardly makes bullying a component of human nature. Bullying is abnormal, anti-social behavior.

Kalman also claims that bullying is free speech protected by the Constitution. Verbally harassing, sexually badgering, slander and in other ways creating hostile environments are not protected free speech. We're not talking here about the occasional unkind cutting remark -- this refers to the repeated, deliberate, targeted verbal assaults as well as physical assaults which are on the rise in our schools, according to a U.S. Department of Justice report on bullying.

Kalman also states that anti-bullying policies in schools don't work, citing a study done by a Canadian psychologist. The Department of Justice found in its research that zero-tolerance policies don't work. They also concluded that encouraging victims to face down a bully on their own (as Kalman advocates) is not only ineffective but dangerous. What has been documented is that there are several successful anti-bullying programs that are currently in use all over the world.

In schools where a proven anti-bullying program such as Operation Respect was implemented, teachers reported reductions in hostility, hitting and angry explosions and in bullying in general.

What is most disturbing about Kalman's attitude is his implication that bullying is entirely the problem of the victim. Bullying, in fact, is a social problem. A study in Sweden found

60 percent of school bullies go on to be convicted of crimes by the time they are in their early 20s. Forty percent of those individuals will end up being repeat offenders.

The victims of bullies often suffer from depression, anxiety disorders, lower academic achievement, substance abuse, are truant and commit suicide at a far higher rate than their peers who aren't bullied. This trend extends into adulthood. For the 6 percent of those who are bullied and, in turn, lash out at others, they not only suffer the same ill effects as those who are only bullied, but they are more inclined to commit violent crimes. Columbine gave us a tragic example. An individual's problem?

So what should we as a civilized society do to address this problem, besides allowing our common sense to overrule the advice of crackpot ``experts"? Our society as a whole has become increasingly tolerant of bullying behavior, but our community can take steps to eliminate this conduct from our schools.

There are currently bills in the Michigan House and Senate. You can contact your representatives to support these measures. Let the local school board and school administration know that you expect an effective anti-bullying policy to be implemented as part of their regulations. To sit by and do nothing, expecting the victims of bullies to shoulder the responsibility of the bully's behavior, is, of course, the easy thing. As Albert Einstein said, ``The world is a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it."

Katherine Rockafeld is a

resident of Kalamazoo.

Interfaith gathering to focus on hunger

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, May 26, 2006

By George Jaksa

gjaksa@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6332

FLINT - The Food Bank of Eastern Michigan says fighting hunger is often a matter of faith.

So at the food bank's prompting, representatives of several faiths will gather next month in Flint at First Presbyterian Church, 746 S. Saginaw St., for an interfaith service of prayer, song and dance. Recipients of food distributed by religious groups also will attend, to tell about the help they receive.

"We want to create more awareness of the part the community of faith plays in helping the hungry," said Kara Ross, director of programs and agency relations at the food bank, 2312 Lapeer Road.

The program will be part of National Hunger Awareness Day. Ross said the food bank is one of 26 food banks nationwide hosting an interfaith service on that day.

The one-hour program, open to the public, will feature readings, presentations and speakers representing children, working poor families and senior citizens, Ross said. Baha'i, Christian, Hebrew and Muslim sacred writings will be included in the program.

William Kerr, president of the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan, said more than 75 percent of food pantries served by the food Bank are operated by a faith-based organization. The food bank, in its 25th year, covers 22 counties stretching from Port Huron to Cheboygan.

"We have the resources in this country to ensure that every one of our neighbors has access to adequate food," said Kerr in announcing the service. "We must continue to increase the amount of food that we are directing into local channels to feed the hungry."

Kerr is serving as chairman for the National Hunger Awareness Day Committee for the second straight year. A coalition of organizations is addressing what has been described as a growing number of hungry Americans. A program on June 5 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., will highlight the needs.

Theme of the Flint program will be "The Face of Hunger Will Surprise You."

"The face of hunger in eastern Michigan may come as a surprise to many people," Kerr said. "It is a disgrace that we are living in a day when millions of adults, hard-working

families with children and seniors are forced to make difficult choices between food and daily necessities in every community of the United States."

In addition to the service, fundraising efforts for the food bank also are planned locally in June.

QUICK TAKE
<p>Raising hunger awareness</p> <p>□ Flint First Presbyterian Church, 746 S. Saginaw St., will host a program June 6 at 6 p.m. to draw attention to the plight of the hungry. It's part of National Hunger Awareness Day.</p> <p>***</p>

Dates set for food bank distribution

Muskegon Chronicle

Friday, May 26, 2006

FROM LOCAL REPORTS

A local food bank will distribute 7,500 pounds of fresh fruit, vegetables and other food June 6 and June 20 at St. Patrick's Church, 901 Columbus, Grand Haven.

The event starts 10 a.m. and the food is free for those in need. The food is provided by the Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan and Love INC (In the Name of Christ).

Visitors are asked to bring their own grocery bags.

For information, call Love INC at (616) 846-2701.

Published May 26, 2006

Fostering family: Eaton County honors couple who've helped 16 kids in 5-1/2 years

By Hugh Leach
Lansing State Journal

The basketball hoops Michael Henderson is building at his Eaton Rapids home are likely to get plenty of use.

With two children of their own, four adopted children and four foster children living with them, Henderson and his wife, Amy, have enough kids to make up two entire teams.

"We have become 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week teachers, therapists, counselors, short-order cooks and taxi drivers," Michael Henderson said.

Not that they mind. Michael and Amy Henderson love having the kids, ages 4 to 14, around.

The couple has had 16 foster children during the past 5 1/2 years - their four adopted children began as their foster children. This week, the Hendersons were named Eaton County Foster Family of the Year.

"We typically look for people who are flexible, have solid parenting skills and are reliable when we recruit foster parents," said Suzanne Stiles Burke, foster care supervisor for the Eaton County Department of Human Services.

"There is a unique skill in devoting time and energy to a child, knowing he or she may be with you for only a short time."

Amy Henderson summed it up this way:

"Foster parenting is the hardest job you'll ever love to do."

Children placed in foster care come from several different situations. In many cases, their biological parents simply do not have the necessary parenting skills to properly care for them, and the children

are removed while they get help in learning those skills.

"It isn't that the parents don't love their children," Amy Henderson said. "They do. And the goal of foster care is to eventually reunite the children with their parents. You have to believe people can change."

On occasion, however, reunification doesn't work. In those cases, children may be available for adoption, often by their foster families who have come to know and love them.

When they decided to adopt and also continue to take in more foster children, the Hendersons realized one of them had to become a stay-at-home parent. Michael volunteered.

Amy is an accountant for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and loves it. Michael worked in a tool-and-die shop and didn't care for it.

"I had a job," he said. "She has a career."

Foster care has been a mostly positive experience for the Hendersons, although there have been a few times when children placed with them needed more services than they could provide and were moved elsewhere.

The Hendersons give their two biological children, Meagan, 10, and Bobby, 8, a large share of the credit in making things work.

"They have accepted the other children and been willing to share with them," Amy said "They have done more for the other kids than we could."

Although being a foster parent is sometimes demanding and time-consuming, the Hendersons say it is rewarding as well.

Knowing they have made a positive difference in the life of a child, they say, is priceless.

Contact Hugh Leach at 377-1119 or hleach@lsj.com.

Eaton County foster care facts

- Licensed foster care homes: About 55
- Commitment: Placements range from 21 days to 15 months

- Goal: Eventual reunification of children and biological parents
- Adoption: Children who cannot be returned to their biological parents often are adopted by relatives or foster parents.
- Assistance: Payments help cover the cost of a child's care.
- Support: Eaton County Department of Human Services caseworkers; Eaton County Foster & Adoptive Support Network
- Information: Juls Mueller-Hayes, Eaton County foster home recruiter, 543-5844 or e-mail mueller-hayesj@michigan.gov

Source: Suzanne Stiles Burke, Eaton County foster care program supervisor

Published: Wednesday, May 24, 2006

Foster homes are vital

Editor: Gov. Granholm has declared the month of May as Foster Care Month in Michigan.

This month the Department of Human Services is taking time to show appreciation for the dedication of our foster families.

Foster parents in Dickinson and Iron Counties provide a safe, loving and secure environment for children from very troubled families. Some of our foster families have served our community for decades while others are just getting started. It is not an easy job and few people are willing to do it.

Our foster homes are critical in protecting children from further abuse. When a suitable placement can not be found in our local community we are forced to place children out of this area. Can you imagine the trauma of first being removed from your home because of abuse and then being placed in a new town and school system?

Recruiting of new homes is always a challenge because of the love, patience, and perseverance needed by foster parents.

At this time Dickinson County has 40 children in foster care and Iron has 15. We are always seeking new foster homes. The greatest need exists for homes for teens, special needs children and larger sibling groups. Anyone interested in learning more about foster care can call me at (906) 779- 5893.

Robert Roberge

Iron Mountain

Director, Dickinson/Iron Department of Human Services

Jobless rate falls in 17 major state areas

May 26, 2006

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Unemployment rates decreased in all of Michigan's 17 major labor market areas in April, state officials said Thursday.

Rick Waclawek, director of the state's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, said the seasonally unadjusted rate declines were expected and are fairly typical for April.

In 15 of the 17 markets, however, the jobless rates are higher than they were a year ago. The only region with a lower unemployment rate than in April 2005 was the Detroit area, while the Saginaw region had the same rate as a year ago.

Overall employment levels edged upward in most regions last month. The state had 4.37 million seasonally unadjusted payroll jobs in April, an increase of 54,000 from March, according to a monthly survey of employers.

The leisure and hospitality sector gained 17,000 jobs. Construction added 15,000 jobs. Business and professional services added 13,000 jobs.

The large and typical job increases in those sectors improved the regional rates, which are not seasonally adjusted. But the typical monthly employment swings were not given as much weight in the statewide, seasonally adjusted rate for April. It was released earlier this month.

National and state unemployment rates are seasonally adjusted to remove seasonal influences such as production cycles, holidays, model changeovers and climate conditions. Michigan's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 7.2% in April, well above the national average of 4.7%.

The state's major labor market areas, their seasonally unadjusted jobless rates for April and the change since March were:

- ☐ Ann Arbor, 4.2%, down from 4.7%.
- ☐ Battle Creek, 6.7%, down from 7.2%.
- ☐ Bay City, 7.4%, down from 8%.
- ☐ Detroit-Warren-Livonia, 6.9%, down from 7.6%.
- ☐ Flint, 8.2%, down from 8.9%.
- ☐ Grand Rapids-Wyoming, 5.8%, down from 6.4%.
- ☐ Holland-Grand Haven, 5%, down from 5.6%.
- ☐ Jackson, 6.8%, down from 7.4%.
- ☐ Kalamazoo-Portage, 5.3%, down from 6%.
- ☐ Lansing-East Lansing, 5.9%, down from 6.3%.
- ☐ Monroe, 5.9%, down from 6.6%.
- ☐ Muskegon-Norton Shores, 6.7%, down from 7.2%.
- ☐ Niles-Benton Harbor, 6.8%, down from 7.4%.
- ☐ Saginaw-Saginaw Township North, 7.7%, down from 8.4%.
- ☐ Upper Peninsula, 8.4%, down from 9%.
- ☐ Northeast Lower Michigan, 9.9%, down from 11.7%.
- ☐ Northwest Lower Michigan, 7.7%, down from 8.8%.

Rosenthal smiles, recalling how Mark Unger successfully completed a five-month program, and despite major hurdles in his life -- a failing marriage, his wife's death, loss of custody of his sons, and facing criminal charges that carry a possible life sentence -- has remained clean and sober.

Rosenthal said she also misses her daughter-in-law. "Flo was so very talented," she said. "Always joking and fun to be around. All the good things her friends have said about her are all true."

She holds a blue coin purse Florence gave her as a gift in one hand. In the other is a red-and-black flecked stone she picked up on one of her many walks in the scenic hills of Beulah -- one she plans to place on Florence's grave in loving memory, a tradition of her faith.

"One thing she used to say is 'Mark and I are good at being parents.' And whatever problems they had between themselves, they always showed love for their boys," she said.

Rosenthal is allowed supervised visits with her grandchildren, who live with the Sterns.

She looks forward to seeing Max on Friday night and wants to assure him that she and his father are always there for them.

"I'm so proud of (the boys)," she said. "Can you imagine having to go through what they have? They need all of us there for them."

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A few more find jobs in county in April

Friday, May 26, 2006

JEAN SPENNER
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Saginaw County saw an increase of 500 jobs in April from March, figures from the state Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives indicate.

Some of the gains came in construction, retail trade and leisure and hospitality, said Jason Palmer, an analyst for the mid-Michigan labor market. There also were recalls from short-term layoffs in manufacturing.

In Saginaw County, there was little change in the size of the labor force from March, when it was 100,900, to April, when it was 100,700, Palmer said. However, more people are working -- 92,900 in April compared to 92,400 in March.

The county's unemployment rate in April dropped to 7.7 percent, down 0.7 percentage point from March, figures show. The number matches the unemployment rate of April 2005, bureau officials said.

Jobless rates are higher than they were a year ago in 15 of the 17 markets. The Detroit area was the only region with a lower unemployment rate.

Across the state, the leisure and hospitality sector gained 17,000 jobs, construction added 15,000 jobs and business and professional services added 13,000 jobs.

Record turnout of job seekers

40 employers look for potential employees

PUBLISHED: May 26, 2006

By Robert Selwa
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Large numbers of job seekers spent part of their day at the county park Thursday, looking for a new or better job.

"At the last job fair we had a total of about 500 people," said Bob Apczynski, employment service coordinator of Michigan Works!, which sponsored the annual job fair. "Here we have 500 people in just the first hour. There were people already lined up at 8 a.m., an hour before it started."

Eventually a total of about 1,000 people came to the job fair, a record for the event. The 40 employers who had booths were also a record. Usually about 25 to 30 employees take part in these job fairs.

Apczynski said the record turnouts of both employers and job seekers show "what the economy is like in this area. There are a lot of people out of work, or needing help looking for jobs." Unemployment in Macomb County has been running above seven percent so far this year.

He said the substantial downturn in manufacturing in southeast Michigan is a major factor in the struggling economy of the area.

Michigan Works also provided information on how people can improve their skills and create new opportunities for themselves.

"It was good that a lot of people were able to find out about us today," Apczynski said.

Michigan Works offers such services as job search, career education reports, training opportunities, study skill strategies, surviving unemployment, Second Chance, the Michigan Talent Bank, resume writing, employment application skills, cover letter writing, interviewing skills, and effective networking.

"We were just happy to see the turnout of both employers and job seekers today," Apczynski said. "We left with a good feeling that a lot of people will end up with good jobs as a result."

Help centers for job leads

The Michigan Works! program for Macomb County is based in the VerKuijen Building, 21885 Dunham Road, Clinton Township, phone number (586) 469-5022.

Michigan Works! has service centers at 75 N. River Road, Mount Clemens, phone number (586) 469-7702; 43630 Hayes, Clinton Township, phone number (586) 263-1501; and 15950 Twelve Mile Road, Roseville, phone number (586) 447-9200.

Missing patient found at bus station

The Grand Rapids Press

Friday, May 26, 2006

GRAND RAPIDS -- A Spectrum Health Kent Community Campus patient who suffers from dementia and Alzheimer's was found Friday morning after going missing overnight. Jessie Lee Cannon, 75, was last seen at the Fuller Avenue NE hospital about 3:20 p.m. Thursday. Cannon was found at a bus station before 10 a.m. today, Spectrum spokeswoman Anne Veltema said. Hospital officials were trying to determine how Cannon walked away. He was wearing an electronic "Wander Guard" on his wrist that should have set off an alarm when he opened the door, officials said.

Public transportation an economic necessity

The Kalamazoo Gazette

Friday, May 26, 2006

Metro Transit got some good news and some not-so-good news from a survey of likely Kalamazoo County voters last month.

The good news: After hearing the reasons why the public transportation system needs an infusion of tax dollars, a slim majority says it would be likely to vote for a 1-mill property tax increase to maintain the service.

The not-so-good news: An overwhelming majority say convincing arguments against a transportation millage are that homeowners can only be asked to support so many tax increases and that, because of the economy, now is a bad time to ask for a property tax increase.

More not-so-good news: If voters are asked for a transportation millage after a successful bid in August for a property tax increase for the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home, only 4 percent said they'd be more likely to vote for another property tax increase for transportation.

Another 17 percent said they'd be less likely to vote for it.

In short, advocates of a tax increase for public transportation could convince voters of the need for it. But it would be a really hard sell, especially outside of Kalamazoo, where voters are already paying a property tax to support Metro Transit.

This newspaper has long been a supporter of public transportation.

It offers a critical link between low-income workers and their jobs. It offers senior citizens who don't drive anymore a way to remain independent. And it gives drivers a way to leave their cars at home and save money on gas.

Unfortunately, Metro Transit is being squeezed between state funding cuts and a jump in fuel costs. And riders, most of them having low incomes, cannot be expected to make up the difference by paying considerably more for fares.

It's a bad time to cut services. If anything, public transportation users in Kalamazoo County deserve more and better services, not less. We suspect Metro Transit would be used more if the hours of operation were longer, if there were more routes that went farther out, and if buses ran more frequently.

Cutting services will only make the system useful to fewer people. Employers of low-income workers need a system that reliably gets their labor force to work and on time.

To avoid system cuts, it is imperative that officials craft a proposal that voters can endorse -- especially out-county voters whose communities are not served by Metro Transit and who may have never set foot on a Metro Transit bus and have no plans to do so.

It won't be an easy sell, especially coming on the heels of the August vote on a tax increase to replace the juvenile home.

But public transportation is an essential economic need for most communities -- and our community is no exception.

Article published May 26, 2006

Monroe News

Salvation Army plans 'Campus of Hope'

When the Salvation Army looked closely at Monroe County's homeless and needy populations, officials started to see some gaps in service.

"We knew we are always at capacity at the Corps centers," said Maj. Jimmy Wilson, head of the Christian aid organization. "We knew there were other needs out there to be met."

After a year of planning and research, the answer lies in what he calls the "Campus of Hope."

The group is envisioning a sprawling complex to be built around its E. Front St. offices in Monroe. Maj. Wilson said the idea is to congregate the services into a beacon of assistance for the needy.

"It would be a one-stop place for help," he said.

Though plans are preliminary, the center would offer an expanded shelter for homeless families, transitional housing for seniors and singles, a depot for community services and a preventative medical clinic.

The Salvation Army recently unveiled the vision for the center, though many of the details - including funding - will be fleshed out in the coming months. Maj. Wilson said the group is undergoing a feasibility study to see what changes, additions or deletions need to be made to the plan.

The proposal is in line with the 10-year goal shared by a coalition of assistance groups to eliminate homelessness in the county.

The center would be composed of three to four buildings modeled after the new centralized facilities in Warren and other proposals around southeast Michigan.

The essential parts of the complex follow roughly the same services as the Salvation Army's current facilities spread around the area.

One building would house community services, like educational programming, counseling and food assistance. It would allow the Salvation Army to locate its Christmas distribution program at a single site and increase the visibility of the programs.

Maj. Wilson said it would also allow the group to expand the offerings of life skills

classes, like budgeting, parenting and job hunting.

In a slight departure for the group, a worship center would also be located in the building, instead of a chapel dedicated for Sunday services.

Another building would house an expanded shelter aimed at separately housing families and single individuals. Though figures are still preliminary, he said it could take in at least double the capacity of the current shelters.

Transitional housing for single individuals and seniors is also being eyed for a separate building in the complex.

The efficiency apartments would offer low-rent dwellings for the needy to build the foundations for life.

"This is in that time after the crisis," he said. "For one to two years, people could rent a place on a sliding scale."

With the pairing of counseling and housing in the same locale, Maj. Wilson said the center could be a more effective way to help.

But two services in particular key into the emerging needs of the community.

The center would have a separate building to house a community medical clinic that offers preventative medical care.

Maj. Wilson said hospital and health agency officials approached him a year ago about locating a clinic within the Salvation Army's operation with the idea of increasing accessibility.

"Many are getting their medical care from the emergency room," the major said. "If you are going to treat the flu, it's not the place to go."

So the clinic would provide basic non-emergency services like that of a regular physician.

"I think it would be the perfect marriage having that on the campus," he said.

Also planned in the complex would be a community "Team Table" soup kitchen. It would make space available for any group wanting to help feed the hungry.

The idea came about before local groups launched programs offering dinners to the homeless, but would include others in the operation.

"This is not designed to take away from what anyone else is doing," Major Wilson said. "We're all working toward the same goal. It's to help toward the goal."

The plan has since received written support from several local agencies, including the county's United Way, Network on Homelessness and Human Services Collaborative Network. Officials have been presenting the idea to services agencies around the area.

Maj. Wilson said the group estimated the cost at about \$5 million, though the feasibility study could change the scope. The group would mobilize a capital campaign after the study is complete.

Given the needs, the Salvation Army official said it remains a priority in wiping out homelessness.

"The dreams will happen as money makes it possible," he said. "But we're trying to be another provider in that goal."

United Way distributes \$40,000

Friday, May 26, 2006

By Susan J. Demas
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After falling more than \$20,000 short of its \$80,000 fundraising goal, the Albion-Homer United Way is funding less than half of the amount local agencies asked for.

"It's been real hard," said Sue Klepper, United Way board president.

The agency last month doled out \$40,000 to 18 local organizations for health and wellness, workforce development, family subsistence and education programs. United Way also donated to Hurricane Katrina relief effort.

United Way received requests for \$97,000. Klepper said the agency was able to deliver at least some funding to every agency that applied.

That wasn't the case for the Jackson County branch, which funded 33 of 50 organizations that applied for the first year of the 2006-09 grant cycle.

Several Jackson-area agencies have taken United Way to task for slashing grants. The agency cut funding from \$1.3 million in 2005 to about \$940,000 this year.

The Albion-Homer United Way raised about \$56,000 for its 2005-06 campaign, but is still waiting for a few pledges to straggle in. The agency raised more than \$50,000 of its \$65,000 goal for 2004-05.

CEO Terry Langston's resignation in December put a dent in fund-raising, Klepper said.

Last week the United Way board hired interim CEO Dawn Mackety, former director of the Kingman Museum in Battle Creek.

To boost donations this cycle, Klepper said the agency is concentrating on modernizing operations and building inroads in Homer.

LOCAL COLUMNISTS

ROCHELLE RILEY: Celebrate local heroes

May 26, 2006

BY ROCHELLE RILEY
FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

If you didn't attend this year's annual Governor's Service Awards, you missed some powerful stories and some mighty special people.

You should kick yourself for missing Mary Clay, who, at 82, is still an active member of Grand Rapids' Foster Grandparent program. She works with young men in Union High's Autism Program, taking her boys shopping to teach them to pay for purchases and get the right change. They also help her make cookies.

Kick yourself again for missing the kids of AMIGOS, the bilingual mentoring partnership that pairs students from Kalamazoo College with students from the Maple Street Magnet. You should also lament not meeting Randy Walker, who, through the Detroit chapter of 100 Black Men, has mentored several young men to success. One, Kevin, will enter Northern Michigan University this fall to study psychology. A second, Arbie, who lives with Walker, is heading to Howard University to study international business. Walker, a vice president at Health Alliance Plan (HAP), also mentors another young man, Anton, at work. Anton has joined 100 Black Men to become a future mentor himself.

"It actually is my passion," said Walker, who won the Mentor of the Year award. "I grew up in a house with a father who didn't spend any time with me and my brothers. I was determined that when I had kids I was going to spend a lot of time with them and reach out."

In addition to raising his two sons, he has raised three nephews and mentored his three other charges.

Best kind of stars

Gov. Jennifer Granholm, First Gentleman Dan Mulhern and Oscar-nominated actor Jeff Daniels took the stage at the Fox Theatre Saturday night with corporate sponsors and me to pay tribute to the stars in the audience.

A Michigan Community Service Commission ceremony that began as a lunch for 150 people 12 years ago became, for the first time Saturday, an Academy Awards-like event for 1,800.

Forty finalists and their families and friends watched winners get awards in eight categories, plus two awards for philanthropy. To see the complete list of winners, visit www.michigan.gov/mcsc.

Good deeds on motorcycles

The evening's highlight came when Motown became Harleypark, and nearly 100 members of the nation's largest bike chapter, the

Wolverine Harley-Davidson HOG Chapter No. 1332 of Clinton Township, took the stage to get the Exemplary Community Service Program award.

Free spirits and free thinkers, they wore jeans, leather, bandanas and a sense of community that comes from being their own community.

The 1,600-member chapter does four charity rides a year, raising \$20,000 to \$50,000 per ride, which they donate to myriad organizations. They also host a party to reunite children with their former foster families, giving the kids rides to the party on their backs of their bikes. They also adopt a family for holidays and do blood drives and Harley's Angels toy drives.

We celebrate music. We celebrate movies. I was thrilled to see us celebrate service.

ROCHELLE RILEY'S columns are published on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Contact her at

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Friday, May 26, 2006

Unger trial 'tearing everyone up' 2 grieving families share pain, courtroom

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

BEULAH -- Sometime tonight, family and friends will gather around Max Unger and celebrate his bar mitzvah at Temple Emmanuel in Birmingham.

There will be warm hugs, laughter and well-deserved blessings for the 12-year-old boy as he celebrates his coming of age. But notably absent at the pivotal event will be the teenager's mother, Florence, and his father, Mark.

Florence Unger died at a northern Michigan resort in October 2003; Mark Unger sits in a Benzie County Jail cell, charged with the first-degree murder of his wife.

"It's so sad," said Bette Rosenthal, Mark Unger's mother. "Both Mark and Flo should be there for Max and his brother (Tyler, 9) too. This is tearing everyone up."

In a trial such as this, which has drawn much media attention and packed a small Benzie County circuit courtroom since April 26, the personal loss for the family is often overlooked in the blur of legal procedures, forensic evidence, and testimony from experts and those who knew and loved the couple.

As constant a presence as the jury, Harold and Claire Stern, Florence's parents, arrive early each morning and are on a familiar, first-name basis with many attorneys, court workers, news media and even locals.

Also present daily are members of Unger's family, including his mother, who quietly takes her seat in the courtroom as close to her son as is allowed. They exchange smiles and mouth words.

There are no such signs of comfort or words between the in-laws. If they come into each other's view, each quickly looks away. And they likely will maintain that distance tonight at a ceremony that normally brings proud in-laws together.

They wear their respective sorrow stoically in the quiet of the courtroom. On one side sit parents who have buried a daughter and who wince at testimony describing how she may have died. On the other is a mother who rejects theories of what her son may have done and fears what the future holds for him.

For weeks, Rosenthal has traveled back and forth from her Islamorada, Fla., home -- the same one she has put up for sale to pay for her son's legal defense.

She notes there have been other battles won by her family. She recalls how she and other relatives convinced Mark Unger four years ago that he needed to go into a treatment program for his drug and gambling addictions.

"He thought he could do it on his own," she said. "Then when he was no longer working, he thought he could make some easy money gambling, which of course, no one ever does."



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

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Michigan Department of Human Services Suspends the Family Day Care Home Certificate of Registration DF280262583 of Christie Patzer

May 26, 2006

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children and Adult Licensing issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the license of Grand Traverse County family day care home provider Christie Patzer, 6811 Cook Road, Williamsburg, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the child day care family home.

The May 23, 2006, complaint investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules regarding discipline, caregiver responsibilities, and supervision. OCAL took emergency action to protect the health, welfare, and safety of children.

Effective 6:00 p.m., May 24, 2006, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Christie Patzer from operating a family day care home at 6811 Cook Road, Williamsburg, Michigan, or at any other address or location. Accordingly, she may not accept children for care after that date and time. The order also requires Ms. Patzer to inform all of the parents of children in her care that her certificate of registration has been suspended and that she can no longer provide day care.

Ms. Patzer has held a certificate of registration to operate a family day care home since February 9, 2004. The certificate of registration was for six children.

Michigan law defines a day care family home "as a private home in which 1 but fewer than 7 minor children are received for care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day, unattended by a parent or legal guardian, except children related to an adult member of the family by blood, marriage, or adoption."

For more information, consult DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs